

It is a real pleasure to be with you all today here at Macalester. I want to thank Suzanne Hansen for inviting me to speak to you about the critically important issues of climate change and making the transition to a clean energy economy. And I want to commend you for showing up on a beautiful Friday afternoon in the spring!

I am going to start off by offering some opening comments, and then I want to hear your ideas, questions and concerns. You all have studied the science and facts behind climate change. You know that:

- Climate change is real;
- It is primarily caused by humans;
- And that unless we start cutting emissions sharply, climate change will make the world a very difficult place for us to live.

The challenge of confronting climate change is unlike any other our country – or the world – has ever faced. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050 is a scientific challenge that will stretch us to invent, innovate and explore. It is an economic challenge that will reshape how we produce, consume, and live our day-to-day lives. And it is a political challenge – that is the challenge I am facing in Congress.

Our country needs your help on each of these.

- America needs scientists and engineers to discover and design solutions.
- We need entrepreneurs to create new, cleaner products.
- And we need public officials with the ability to explain complicated problems like climate change and the courage to act when science shows us we must.

America needs your help because climate change is a problem we must solve.

- Climate change is a danger to our economy, national security, public health and to

ecosystems around the planet.

- And it threatens every other country in the world – in some places droughts will threaten food production; in other areas rising sea levels will put entire countries underwater.

To tackle climate change, America needs to make a rapid transition away from fossil fuel dependence and towards a clean energy economy. You would think \$4 per gallon gas would be enough to motivate America to action. Every time gas prices spike, our country has a serious but very short-lived conversation about energy policy. For example – next week in the U.S. House, my Republican colleagues will bring a bill to the House floor to promote oil and gas drilling in the Gulf of Mexico as a solution to high gas prices. As you probably know, more oil drilling will not protect consumers from high gas prices. And increasing America's dependence on oil is the exact opposite direction we need to go.

The truth is, there are no quick fixes to high gas prices – or climate change. But there are common sense steps we must take now to: reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and strengthen Minnesota's economy with home-grown energy solutions.

First, the federal budget needs to change so American taxpayers are funding the future – clean energy – and not the past – fossil fuels. Every year, oil and gas companies receive over \$8 billion of your tax dollars in subsidies. Did anyone see that Exxon Mobil released its first quarter profit figures this week? Exxon made over \$10 billion profit – not revenue – profit. It was a 69 percent increase in profit.

It makes absolutely no sense to use precious tax dollars to subsidize America's most profitable industry. You already pay them at the pump, why should you pay them again with your federal tax dollars!

I am a cosponsor of *The End Big Oil Tax Subsidies Act* of 2011 – H.R. 601. Yesterday, I joined 27 of my colleagues in the House in sending a letter to Speaker Boehner asking him to bring this bill to the floor and repeal wasteful fossil fuel subsidies. We need to end subsidies for fossil fuel companies and increase investment in clean energy technology – and we need to do it fast.

The Pew Charitable Trust just released a report titled: "Who's Winning the Clean Energy

Race?" In 2008, America was #1 in the world in private clean energy investment. By 2010 America had slipped to #3 behind China and Germany. Why is America losing the clean energy race?

The Director of Pew's Clean Energy Program Phyllis Cuttino explained, "The United States' position as a leading destination for clean energy investment is declining because its policy framework is weak and uncertain."

Let me translate: America is losing the race because:

- 1) we don't have a national renewable energy standard
- 2) we have not passed a meaningful climate change bill, and
- 3) we aren't funding clean energy as aggressively as China, Germany, Brazil and our other global competitors.

Unfortunately, the Majority in the House keeps pulling us backwards. The Republican budget that passed the House this month proposes to cut renewable energy development by 60 percent from last year's level. American will not be globally competitive unless we significantly increase investments in clean energy.

In Congress, I am fighting hard to shift incentives from fossil fuels to clean energy. And I am working to make the federal government a partner with local and state efforts to transition to a clean energy economy. The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* passed in 2009 invested \$90 Billion in clean energy research and construction.

Our community is already seeing the benefits of this investment. Earlier this year I cut the ribbon on the City of St. Paul's first electric vehicle. Last month, District Energy in downtown St. Paul dedicated the largest solar-thermal energy system in North America. Both of these

projects were supported with *Recovery Act* funds. And this week, the Federal Transit Administration committed nearly half-a-billion dollars for the Central Corridor light rail. This critical transit line between St. Paul and Minneapolis will give residents more transportation choices. By working together, a clean energy economy is being built in our community.

I need your help to keep the momentum going in Minnesota. And I need you to use your voices to urge action in Washington. Your generation didn't put oil subsidies in place – but you can help end them. You are not responsible for creating the problem of climate change, but you share the responsibility to solve it.

Thank you again for inviting me to be with you today. I look forward to our dialogue.